WEEK BRINGS VARIED NOVELTIES TO NEW YORK THEATRES

ELISABETH RISDON IN "THE MORRIS DANCE"

The New Plays and Revivals of the Present Week.

SUNDAY—Elmer Reizenstein, who wrote "On Trial," is the author of "The Iron Cross," which the Morningside Players will rehearse publicly at the Comedy Theatre.

MONDAY—Mrs. Emilie Hapgood presents at the Maxine Elliott Theatre to-morrow "Magic," by G. C. Chesterton, to be preceded by John Galworthy's one act play "The Little Man."

John Cort will present at the Criterion Theatre to-morrow night "Johnny Get Your Gun," which Edmund Lawrence Burke wrote and Dorothy Donnelly has spruced up for metropolitan use.

The Washington Square Players will give the third bill of their subscription season to-morrow at the Comedy Theatre.

TUESDAY—Winthrop Ames will produce Granville Barker's adaptation of "The Wrong Box," by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne. Mr. Barker has called the result "The Morris Dance." The Morningside players will produce "The Iron Cross" publicly at the Comedy Theatre.

THURSDAY—The Coburns will give several matinees of Moliere's "The Imaginary Invalid," beginning at the Harris Theatre on Thursday.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

THE question of treatment as opposed to subject matter has always been of interest in the theatre. With the increased demand for plays and the lack of any evidence that there is to be the same augmented supply to fill it, treatment has assumed an importance which it never possessed in the past. Even within recent years there was rather a feeling of contempt for this method of presenting a play which did not possess the elements of inevitable vitality. The late Charles Frohman, for instance, in his large manner of producing numerous plays in the course of a season would never have had the time to make the treatment of them as important as it might seem, since there were never stage managers enough to devote to his enterprises all the care necessary to make treatment an important element in their performance. Then there was never any full hearted belief among the managers of a decade ago that the manner in which a play was produced could really have a vital effect on its popularity. Unless the strength was in the play itself there was no saving it through the ministrations of the producer, who was also in control of the beauties that the scene painter and the decorator might add to the play.

But David Belasco has always been a strong advocate of the effectiveness of treatment during the past twenty years. It would be easy to say that he descended directly from the original *Crummles*, but there is much more than that worthy's devotion to realism in the lesson that has been taught by David Belasco's successes to the American stage. Treatment has gone further with him than the mere desire to add the effect of realism to his scenes. He is in the highest degree an interpreter of the author to the public. He stands between the playgoer and the dramatist. It is through his eyes that the public is inevitably led to see every play which comes under his hand on its way to the stage.

It will always be difficult to decide why "The Return of Peter Grimm," which represented to a higher degree than any other play he ever produced the genius of Mr. Belasco for preparing the public to accept what it ordinarily could not be made to accept under any conditions, fell short of the appreciation it deserved. Its melancholy story was probably too depressing, in spite of the atmosphere of half reality, half dream in which the play moved. Mr. Belasco's faculty of transmitting his own interpretation of a play to another medium was never proven so well as by the spiritual, poetic projection of the story of this disembodied hero.

Such is this manager's "treatment" of all the plays that come to him. No wonder then that authors are willing to give him their plays for a royalty smaller than they would consider from any other manager. It is a very good business investment. A smaller royalty is better when the play runs for a season or two than a large one paid on a piece that lasts but a few weeks. It is often the Belasco "treatment" that insures success in a larger measure and playwrights are rewarded through the exercise of his skill.

It would be difficult to imagine "Little Lady in Blue" in any other hands than his, but it is pleasanter to think of some other specimens of his workmanship than the tender, delicately shaded pastel that he has made from such unpromising material for the stage of the Belasco Theatre. It is possible to ask what "Little Lady in Blue" would have been without his cooperation. But what would have been "Marie Odile" in the hands of the ordinary producer? Here was material to stimulate the imagination and affection of the manager. Of course there was more material here than in some of the other plays on which he has employed his talents. And here is of course the answer for the fellow who believes that treatment even in deciding the success of a play can never be more than incidental.

Winthrop Ames has imparted his own manner of production to the theatre since his activities began, but it cannot be unjust to give him greatest credit for having introduced the element of taste into his efforts as a producer. Of course there is no end of taste in all theatrical productions. But like that in "The Portrait of a Lady" most of it is bad. Most of it is moreover so astonishingly and inexcusably bad that one wonders where it could have had its beginnings. Whatever else Mr. Ames may have accomplished since he was welcomed in the theatre he has imparted to all his treatment of the drama unfailingly the element of good taste.

In the field of musical comedy there could be no more important proof of the market value of taste than the success of Elisabeth Marbury's little plays with music. They are certainly not epoch making in any particular. There were of course clever speeches in "Very Good Eddie" and there was uncommonly successful music from Jerome Kerns. The same praise may in a considerably less degree be applied to "Nobody Home." But these two plays had, in common with "Love o' Mike," their successor at the Shubert Theatre now, the sort of treatment which lifted them altogether out of the usual run of half vulgar, altogether ordinary and generally flashy musical plays of commerce. But for the effort to impart a special treatment to them by which they are placed in a class altogether their own they might have fallen by the wayside within a few weeks. Certainly their intrinsic merits would never have carried them far.

But the especial care which sends them out into the world, clad not only modishly but with discriminating taste and acted politely against artistic backgrounds, gives these plays with music a cachet which none others possess. These pieces please everybody. It is never found that the audiences complain of their lack of vulgarity. On the other hand, many musical plays are offensive to spectators who do not care for what the stage manager regards as necessary to vivacity. So even in musical plays as well as the more important departments there are unmistakable evidences that the value of "treatment" is not to be overlooked.

MARGARET MOWER WITH THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS at the COMEDY THEATRE.

Current Productions.

Astor, "Her Soldier Boy"; Bandbox, "The Lodger"; Belasco, "Little Lady in Blue"; Booth, "A Successful Calamity"; Bramhall, "Keeping Up Appearances"; Casino, "You're In Love"; Century, "The Century Girl"; Cohan, "Come Out of the Kitchen"; Cohan & Harris, "Captain Kidd, Jr."; Comedy, the Washington Square Players; Cort, "Upstairs and Down"; Criterion, "Johnny Get Your Gun"; Eltinge, "Cheating Cheaters"; Eltinge, Nora Bayes's matinees; Empire, "A Kiss for Cinderella"; Forty-eighth Street, "The Thirteenth Chair"; Fulton, "If"; Gaiety, "Turn to the Right"; Garrick, Theatre Francais; Globe, "The Harp of Life"; Harris, "The Yellow Jacket"; Hippodrome, "The Big Show"; Hudson, "Shirley Kaye"; Irving Place, German repertory; Knickerbocker, "The Music Master"; Liberty, "Have a Heart"; Longacre, "Nothing But the Truth"; Lyceum, "The Great Divide"; Manhattan Opera House, "The Wanderer"; Morosco, "Canary Cottage"; Maxine Elliott's, "Magic"; New Amsterdam, "Miss Springtime"; Playhouse, "The Man Who Came Back"; Princess, "'Ception Shoals"; Republic, "Lilac Time"; Shubert, "Love o' Mike"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Old Lady 31"; Winter Garden, "Show of Wonders."

Motion Pictures—Broadway, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea"; Lyric, "The Honor System"; Forty-fourth Street, Geraldine Farrar in "Joan the Woman"; Park, "Enlighten Thy Daughter."

Padriac Colum's three plays are plays in the sense that all the dramaturgy of the Abbey Theatre and other Irish dramatic enterprises may be called dramatic. They are of course included in the comprehensive formula of Granville Barker, who literally stated the principle that anything is a play that can be acted on the stage. By no other definition may Mr. Barker's own creations be so appropriately judged; and his inspiration might have readily found its source in the Irish theatre.

Mr. Colum's three plays are now accessible in book form and offer an interesting specimen of the work to which the young poets and writers were impelled in their effort to put studies of the actual life about them on the humble stages created by the interest of the Irish in themselves and the conditions, social and political, of their country.

With the exception of Lady Gregory, who showed a knowledge of them in some of her plays, "Spreading the News" for instance, few of the Abbey Theatre playwrights troubled their heads about the secrets that add the greatest interest to spoken dialogue on the stage. At the risk of being accused of an overemphasis on technic it is safer to put the trouble in those words. In the definition of Mr. Barker there is room for the interesting output of the young Irish writers. It might be easy to raise a question as to whether or not actors declaiming in the centre of the stage are really acting and not merely repeating the lines of the author.

But enough has been said to show that it is the author's selection of dialogue rather than direct narrative which makes these works plays more than any fitness for effective performance in a theatre. In the book they are most interesting reading to those who turn their thoughts to Ireland of the day, or more accurately, of the day before the war, since the changes there have doubtless affected every branch of society.

In "The Fiddler's House," which was acted first by the Theatre of Ireland in the Rotunda at Dublin on March 21, 1907, it is the artistic tradition of the Irish people that is shown. The old fiddler who has won his honors at the fairs cannot settle down to prosaic life with his neighbors, however reassuring may be the prospects of comfort for his old age. The road calls when it leads to the contests in skill at the fairs. Nothing in the struggle to improve the home and increase the material welfare of the family appeals to him. He hears always the fiddling in his ears, the plaudits of the crowd honoring a poorer man than himself and the perpetual invitation of his soul to enter the lists himself and show his prowess with the best of the fiddlers.

"Them who have the gift, have to follow the gift," the old musician says. And the call is heard even unto the second generation, for his daughter follows her father to Ardagh.

Here Mr. Colum shows the struggle between the individual and the family so characteristic of Irish domestic life to-day, but there is a lyric note eventually sounded in "The Fiddler's House" which is lacking in "Thomas Muskerry" or "The Land."

"Thomas Muskerry" is a play of official life in which the catastrophe arrives too swiftly for probability in view of the tragedy it brings to the protagonist, who at the beginning of the play is the prosperous master of a workhouse about to retire to live on his pension. His increasing inefficiency, through his confidence in himself and his belief in the indefinite continuance in his post, the improvidence of his family and the hostility of the enemies he has made bring him to a disaster almost too sudden for probability. Nothing in the play is finer than the delusion of the master that he is sure of his post in the workhouse so long as he wants to stay when the powers of evil have already begun their work. Conceived in a high vein of tragedy is the final scene of "Thomas Muskerry" with the hero of former days dying among the paupers in the workhouse of which he was the head in the days of his power.

Incredibly swift as the disaster comes in "Thomas Muskerry," there is in neither of Mr. Colum's two other plays any such incentive to the desire to see them on the stage as this study of official life contains. There is a powerful study of a strong nature crumbling under its own weaknesses and those of the personages most closely allied to it, in the leading character. For *Thomas Muskerry* is a man. He is recognizably human in his weakness and in his strength. Then the selfishness and shiftlessness of the family about him are drawn with as much truth to life as the hostility of those he had made his enemies. "Thomas Muskerry" is a more powerful exhibition of Mr. Colum's skill than either "The Fiddler's Home" or "The Land," which dealt not only with the effects of the land act of 1903 but with the influences on Irish life of the emigration to this country of the most valuable element of the community, which is not only an economic necessity but the result of the narrowness and lack of freedom in the rural districts of Ireland.

"Thomas Muskerry" was acted at the Abbey Theatre on May 5, 1910, after its author had ceased to be associated with the organization. In the cast on that occasion were some of the actors that we know well here, such as Sara Allgood, J. M. Kerrigan, Fred O'Donovan and Arthur Sinclair. Now the company has altogether disbanded. Such actors as Miss Allgood and Mr. Sinclair are no longer devoting themselves to any such special fields of their art. Miss Allgood is acting the immortal *Peg* in Australia, while Mr. Sinclair and some of his associates are playing in the English music halls.

It is not easy to determine wherein lies the literary quality of a play. To regard no other plays as literary than such swollen and stilted efforts as "The Lady of Lyons" and "Richelieu" or the plays of Sheridan Knowles, Sheridan and Goldsmith would be to go directly against the better literary judgment of the day. One might as well hold up "Seremonda" as the only literary play on view in New York when "Getting Married" and the Dunsany pieces were to be heard. To be ineptly literary or express the thoughts of characters in words at variance with their natures is as untrue to the best principles of dramatic art as to be downright ignorant.

Yet authors of our own day have been unable to resist the seductive allurement of fine writing. A. W. Pinero has more than once wallowed in this division with the shameless delight of a puppy in a tulip bed. He knew it was wrong, but he could not resist. In the period of "Letty" the playwright was more addicted to this sport. In the highfalutin passages of Dion Boucicault in the days of "London Assurance" there can be found a trace of genius compared to the language of more or less successful authors who had their triumphs in the '70s, however little may be known of them to-day. One need but recall the rhapsodic description of the doctor's profession in "Rosedale" to realize how far writers of that day could wander from truth in the forms of verbal expression.

Robertson helped to get the speech of his characters nearer reality, exaggerated as the form of many of his speeches seem to-day. Of Shaw there is always the criticism that his figures speak quite as he does. Dr. Johnson might have made his fishes talk like whales. It is enough for the Irish playwright that they adhere to his idiom. Galsworthy keeps the speech of his characters close to the bone of their message. Who would not willingly have them depart occasionally from fact in its strictest and least imaginative form for the sake of a little richness and beauty?

Mr. Colum, since his plays are no more than narrative in the form of dialogue, is able to enrich his language with suggestions of imagination and character. Very telling and interesting talk it is, so characteristic of the speakers as well of the time and place in which it is uttered. Not alone do the natures of the men and women who repeat these speeches reveal themselves unmistakably in this language. The mood of the little quarter of the world in which these plays pass is fully shown in their idiom. Mr. Colum's language never appears, in spite of its poetry, the least out of place in the mouths of the simple persons who utter it. In all its varied forms there is truth to life in every word.

Think what effect there would be in such a rare aid to dramatic success if the words were made a part of some theatric plan by which in addition to their beauty they possessed the double significance of telling a story in the terms of the stage. But such an achievement would need not only a poet but a dramatist. Yet in one notable instance the combination existed.

A PLAY A WEEK HERE.

GARRICK (Theatre Francais)—"La Tosca," by Sardou, with Gilda Darthy, Yvonne Mirval, Yvonne Kersac, Edgar Becman, Georges Saulieu, Robert Tourneur and Paul Cerny. Special matinees: Monday, "Son Homme"; Tuesday, "Arsene Lupin."

STANDARD — "Alone at Last," Franz Lehar's operetta, produced by the Shuberts down town last season. The cast will include Harry Conor, Harry T. Hanlin, Robinson Newbold, Forrest Huff, John F. Wheeler, George Wagner, Lester Allen, Mabel Weeks, Elizabeth Goodall, Fritzi von Busing, Bessie McNamee and others.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE—"Watch Your Step," Irving Berlin's syncopated musical piece, which was seen at the New Amsterdam Theatre, will be the attraction of the week beginning at the Lincoln's Birthday matinee.

LEXINGTON — "The Old Homestead," Denman Thompson's perennial drama, will be the attraction for the week at the Lexington Theatre.

CATHLEEN NESBITT IN "MAGIC"

DRAMATIC READINGS.

PAUL LEYSSAC, Danish reader, will give his first American recital at the Princess Theatre Tuesday afternoon. His programme will include several of his own French translations of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales; "An Obsession," by Charles Cros, and Ibsen's "Ase's Death," from "Peer Gynt."

ALFRED E. HENDERSON will give "An Evening in the Trenches With Robert W. Service" at the Princess Theatre on next Sunday evening. This will be the first public reading of the "Rhymes of a Red Cross Man," according to Mr. Henderson. Half of the profits will be devoted to the Prince of Wales Relief Fund.

SPIRITUALISM forms the theme of "Magic," the comedy by G. K. Chesterton to be seen at the Maxine Elliott Theatre on Monday. Chesterton describes his play as a fantastic comedy, but it is more serious in purpose and more human and dramatic in plot and characterization than his definition would imply.

This is the first time that "Magic" has been played in America. The same is true regarding the one act comedy by John Galsworthy that will be used as a curtain raiser. "The Little Man" has been published in book form but has never been presented on the stage either here or in England. The leading parts in both plays will be played by O. P. Heggie, Donald Gallaher, Cathleen Nesbitt, Frank Conroy, Leonard Mudie, Thomas Louden, Wallace Erskine, Walter F. Jones, Herman Gerold, Arthur Fitzgerald, John Burkell, Roy Mitchell, Mateline Meredith and Nella Jefferis. The direction of both plays has been in the hands of Clifford Brooke.

John Cort will present a new farcical entertainment entitled "Johnny Get Your Gun" at the Criterion Theatre to-morrow night. The play has a prologue and three acts and is by Edmund Laurence Burke, with revisions by Dorothy Donnelly. The cast will include Louis Bennison, Grace Valentine, Echlin Gayer, Lorraine Frost, Berton Churchill, Everett Butterfield, Rose Winter, Ralph Nairn, Kate Mayhew, Robert F. Homans, Howard Fay, Billie Scott, Jane Carlton, John Ivan, Barton Williams, Harry Cuscedon, Carl Massey, Tom K. Corliss, Roy Cochrane, Edward Poland and M. A. Meyer.

The Washington Square Players will present the third bill of their subscription season to-morrow at the Comedy Theatre. Four one-act plays will be given. The first will be a tense little play of American life by Bosworth Crocker, entitled "The Last Straw." It will be followed by "A Private Account," translated from the French of Courteline by Beatrice de Holtoir and Edward Goodman. Under the French title of "La Paix Chez Soi" it was given by Sarah Bernhardt's company on her last visit here. In this play Margaret Mower will return to the Washington Square Players. She will also be seen in "The Death of Tintagiles," by Maeterlinck, translated by Philip Moeller. The last play will be an American comedy, "The Hero of Santa Maria," by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman and Ben Hecht.

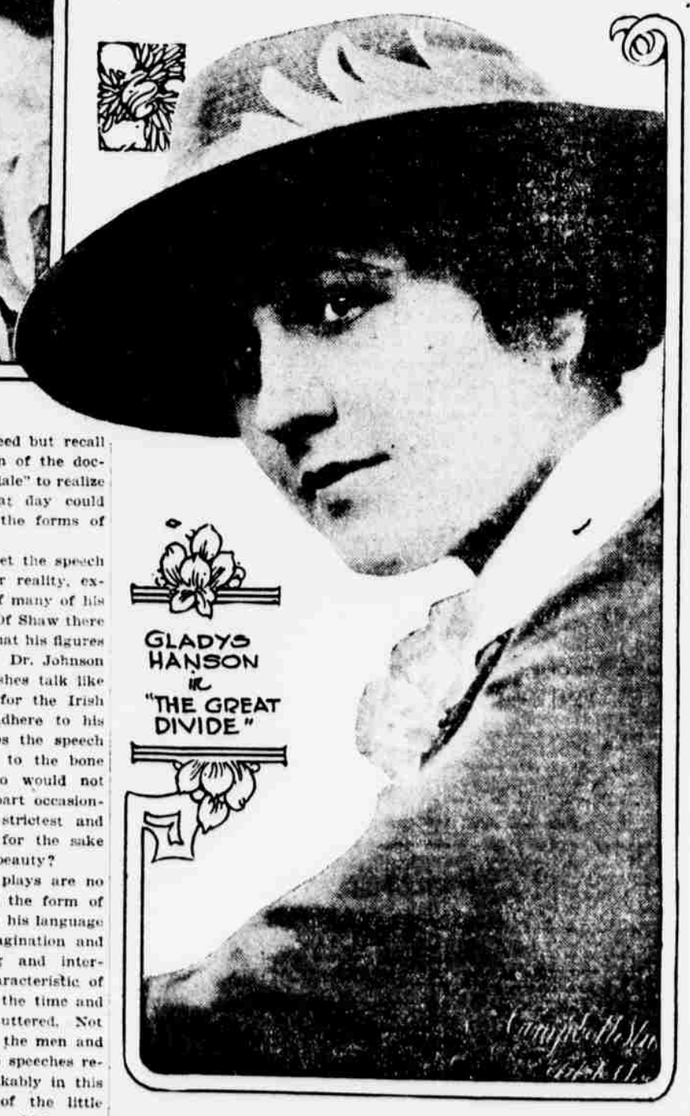
When the Little Theatre reopens its doors to the public on Tuesday after weeks of careful preparation Winthrop Ames will offer to the clientele of his playhouse a farce by Granville Barker entitled "The Morris Dance." It is based upon that most whimsical of tales, "The Wrong Box," which Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in collaboration with his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne.

Mr. Barker contends that farce gives to the spectator release from the moral responsibility of the workaday world. Living up to this belief in the mission of farce, he has reconstructed Stevenson and Osbourne's story, and, utilizing most of their material, he has fashioned it in new form. "The Morris Dance" relates the adventures of the *Finsbury* family and their kinfolk in a contest over a tontine fund of several thousand pounds. *Uncle Joseph* is the sole survivor of the participants in the tontine, and when he is supposed to be killed in a railroad accident his mercenary relatives suffer excruciating agony in their efforts to find his body or ascertain whether or not he is alive. The body of another man meantime encounters all sorts of precarious vicissitudes. What ultimately becomes of it furnishes the denouement of the play.

There are ten scenes in "The Morris Dance" and twenty-three characters. Tony Sarg designed the scenes and Unitt and Wickes painted them. There will be incidental music, including some of the old English Morris dances. In the long list of characters will be found all of the well known types of the novel. Richard Bennett will be seen as the shrewd but erratic solicitor *Michael Finsbury*. Ferdinand Gottschalk will be his scheming and unhappy cousin, John L. Shine is cast for the garrulous *Uncle Joseph*. Robert Rendel will portray the romantic and gullible *Gideon Forsyth*. Herbert Yost will be the anaemic but aspiring artist and Elisabeth Risdon will be the flirtatious *Julia Hazeldean*.

Seven of the ten weeks engagement of "The Yellow Jacket" ended at the Harris Theatre last night. There remain but three weeks during which one may see this charming play. A special holiday matinee will be given on Lincoln's Birthday and on Washington's Birthday. To diversify the last weeks of their tenancy of the Harris Theatre Mr. and Mrs. Coburn have arranged to present in English Moliere's "Le Malade Imaginaire" under the title of "The Imaginary Invalid." The play will be given at four matinees, respectively, Thursday, February 15; Tuesday, February 20; Friday, February 23, and Tuesday, February 27. No attempt has been made to reproduce the traditions of the French stage. The Moliere play will be given according to our more modern and familiar stage traditions. Katherine Prescott Wormeley's translation has been used in preparing this English version, but Miss Wormeley's text is not rigidly adhered to. Edith Ellis has arranged the forthcoming version and the play has been staged under her direction. The costumes have been devised and supervised in their manufacture by Mrs. John W. Alexander of Arden Studios. Assurance of competent interpretation is borne in the announcement that the present excellent company presenting "The Yellow Jacket" will enact the Moliere play.

CHRISTINE NORMAN IN "UPSTAIRS AND DOWN"



GLADYS HANSON IN "THE GREAT DIVIDE"

FLORENCE WALTON IN "THE CENTURY GIRL" © by IRA HILL